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modern times ever obtained any real stability, of which the government did not rest, in one way or another, on the steadfast and immovable rock of Religion. Under our free and happy forms of political constitution, the only way in which this salutary principle can produce its beneficial effects, is by its influence on public opinion; and however much we may regret to differ from the very respectable committee, whose report we have been examining, and the writers who concur with them, we have no hesitation in expressing our conviction that the people of the United States have nothing better, in regard to their political concerns, to hope or wish, than that all their agents should be *influenced in the exercise of temporal power by religious belief*. This would not bring about, as the writer above alluded to supposes, without apparently attaching any very distinct meaning to the terms, a *union of Church and State*; but it would procure us the blessing of Providence—a wise, liberal, efficient, and above all, honest administration of the government in all its branches—a condition of general and constantly progressive prosperity—and to sum up all in one word—peace.

On reviewing the above, we perceive that we have omitted to notice the suggestion thrown out in the Report, that this subject comes properly within the jurisdiction of the State Governments; but we cannot think that the committee would themselves, on further reflection, maintain this doctrine. The regulation of Post-Offices and Post-Roads is plainly attributed by the letter of the constitution to the United States.

ART. VIII.—*Letters and Journals of Lord Byron. With Notices of his Life.* By THOMAS MOORE. Vol. I.

When Dr. Clarke, the traveller, was entering the waters of Egypt, he saw the corpse of one who had fallen in the battle of the Nile, rise from its grave in the ocean, and move slowly past the vessels of the fleet. It was with somewhat similar misgivings, that we saw the resurrection of Lord Byron from the waves of time, which soon close over the noblest wreck, and leave no trace of the spot where it went down. Unless there were something new to be said in his favor, it seemed needless to bring him again before the public eye. The world

was as well acquainted with his frailties as with his transcendent powers; the sentence of the general voice, which is not often reversed, had been pronounced, though with much hesitation; he was declared entitled to a place among the great; but, though he had the elements of a noble nature, no one, so far as we know, claimed for him a place among the good. We regretted, therefore, to have his name and character brought up again for judgment, unless for the purpose of vindication. Such is not the effect, whatever may have been the design of the volume before us. Mr. Moore, though he loved and honored Byron, has, in thus gratifying the public curiosity, rendered no service to the memory of his friend.

We are disposed to rank high among the better feelings of our nature the one which leads us to spare and respect the dead, and makes us indignant at every attempt to draw their frailties to the light, which cannot plead necessity in its justification. We feel grateful to those who have delighted us, even when they have done so with their enchantments; we are beholden to them for whiling away some of the drearier hours of existence; and when they are gone, where our gratitude or censure can no longer reach them, we feel as if their memory were left in our charge, to be guarded from wanton condemnation. We could see their forms under the dissecting knife at Surgeons' Hall with more patience, than we can see their reputation made the sport and gain of mercenary writers. We know that the *Life of Johnson* is a standing excuse for authors of this description, though we see not why; for Boswell would sooner have cut off his hand, than have wilfully disparaged his 'illustrious friend;' and through all his defects of judgment and style his great subject towers, like Westminster Abbey, whose melancholy grandeur is not destroyed by the meanness of the objects round it. In his work, there is no violation of that sacred law of human feeling, which, like the gentle process of nature, seals up the grave, and covers it with verdure and flowers. But this law has been sadly broken in the case of Byron; a man, who, with all his faults—and we have no disposition to deny them—was never wanting in generosity to his friends. Some of them have preyed on his memory like vultures; from the religious Mr. Dallas, who was dissatisfied with the gift of several rich copy-rights, down to Leigh Hunt, who intimated his independence of the commonplace opinion, which insists on gratitude for golden favors. Others, also, of the

strange companions among whom the chances of his life and the waywardness of his temper threw him, retailed his most unguarded words and actions, subjecting him to a scrutiny which few men's lives and language will bear. But the public feeling, which is not apt to be permanently misled, had settled down into the conviction, that Byron, with all his failings, was to be admired and pitied as well as censured; that he was an unfortunate man of genius, made up originally of strong powers and passions; obliged to pass through the double trial of prosperity and misfortune, both perhaps equally severe; and by these disturbing forces, drawn aside from the orbit, in which, with a happier destiny, he might still have been shining as brilliantly as any great light of the world.

We do not, of course, mean to rank the writer of this work among literary vampyres, nor to complain of this publication. In his case, something of this kind was necessary; it was understood that Lord Byron made him the residuary legatee of his infirmities and errors, leaving in his charge a manuscript journal, which, it was said, Mr. Moore thought proper to destroy. Such was the prevailing impression, whatever the facts may have been; and this act, dictated doubtless by the most honorable feelings, was justly thought to bear severely on the character of his noble friend. It gave indulgence and encouragement to the most unfavorable imaginations; it was declaring that the pages on which Byron poured out his thoughts and feelings, were only worthy of the flames. It was expected, that, if this registry was not so thoroughly disgraceful, Mr. Moore would come forward to declare it; he has accordingly done so, and given us parts of this same journal, recovered from its ashes, with various original letters; he has, so far as was possible, made Byron the historian of his own life, giving his own sentiments in his own words; he feels obliged, however, to caution us against being misled by the poet's statements, because, with a strange inverted ambition, he took pleasure in representing himself as worse than he really was. This is no doubt true; but one may doubt whether it will do much to exalt Byron above the level where he chose to stand; this self-misrepresentation would imply some want of reverence for truth, and it would seem as if the moral sentiment must be not a little corrupted when a man glories in his shame. Still, it would be wrong to lay much stress on these avowals, which, wherever they appear, are partly jesting and partly penitential; meant to

bear either aspect, as the case may be : the language of confession is apt to be exaggerated ; jests are not to be weighed like scripture ; and as most men in their confessions meant for the public eye, with the contrition alluded to by Chesterfield, confess themselves guilty of what they consider the cardinal virtues, there are naturally no bounds to their humiliation.

Mr. Moore does not attempt to give any regular examination of Byron's character, aware, perhaps, that the thing was impossible ; for, if by character be meant the decided leaning of the habits and feelings towards good or evil, it would be no more correct to speak of his character, than of the bearing of a vessel drifting on the sea ; or if we mean by character, the general impression received by one who reads his history, it is evident that such an one could gather no single impression. Every change in Byron's life was a new experiment or adventure suggested by the moment's whims ; each new deed contradicted the report of the one that went before it ; like the mercury in the weather-glass, he varied with the changes of the air. Sometimes he rose to a noble height of virtue ; then sunk low in degradation : sometimes he breathed out noble sentiment in inspired language ; then profaned his lips with the dialect of hell : sometimes he practised a hermit's self-denial ; then gave himself up to appetite and passion. The very climate of the country where he happened to be, seemed to spread its influence over him. All his manliness melted away into effeminacy under an Italian sun ; all the strength of his mind and heart seemed to revive among the living shores and mountains of Greece ; and this, while it shows that he had great and active energies within, proves also, that, like others who want principles of action, he needed something external to excite them. In him, these principles, and the unconquerable will, were entirely wanting ; the rough hands of others struck out the fire from his soul. His inconsistencies arising from this cause, are equally perplexing to his enemies and admirers ; each falter in making up their judgment ; the former hesitate in the midst of their sternest condemnation, conscious that all was not evil, and doubtful, whether they are not more just to his vices than his virtues ; while his admirers, in the moments of their warmest enthusiasm, find recollections stealing over their minds which fill them with indignant shame ; they, too, doubt sometimes whether they are not misled by their reverence for Genius, and hardly know whether they feel most sorrow for its perversion or wonder at its power.

His biographer was evidently perplexed with this difficulty, and has therefore left the private character of Byron to be inferred from facts and letters, with here and there some pages of comment and explanation. He does not bring the subject to any full discussion, but praises his friend wherever he can do so with justice, and defends him where his conduct seems to require defending. His remarks are written with more than his usual simplicity; in fact, with very little of the glowing ornament in which his other writings abound; but, notwithstanding this improvement, the work is not likely to be a favorite with either class of readers. The poet's admirers will think that more discretion should have been used in selecting private letters, and that the follies of his youth should, like those of others, be forgotten in the brilliant efforts of his later years; and will wonder why the biographer could not communicate to others the feelings with which, according to his own account, his friend's talents and virtues inspired him. On the other hand, a large class will accuse Mr. Moore, not only of suppressing, but of making rather too light of the poet's misdeeds; of treating as a trifling offence in him, what would have been severely visited upon any other; as in the case of his *brother*, for example (p. 118), they will charge him with making the flower-gardens of poetry a sanctuary for transgressors of moral and social law. Both these faults, inconsistent with each other, as they seem, will be alleged against him. On the whole, the effect of his book will be to lower the character of Byron in the public esteem. No one can charge him with a want of partiality to his subject, and yet, with every disposition to cover the poet's errors, he finds much that he cannot explain away. He readily acknowledges his friend's follies, with a candor for which none of Byron's admirers will thank him; for, in the common estimation, follies bring one into contempt much sooner than vices; men can find something great and commanding in the one, while it is impossible to respect the other.

The literary fate of Byron is a remarkable example of the indulgence shown to men of genius. The world is apt to be rigid enough in its exactions from others, but it offers them a perpetual absolution for all offences, even for their waste of those powers by which it wishes and hopes to be delighted; it receives these spendthrifts of talent with unwearied forgiveness, however far they may have wandered; it permits them, like conquerors,

to trample on all rights and laws ; it finds something beautiful in their very scorn ; nations worship them in the blaze of their fame, and weep with mournful sensibility over their fall. We rejoice to see that the world can transfer its enthusiasm in any degree from military to intellectual greatness, and only desire that it may be careful in selecting its objects of adoration. In the unguarded moments of rapture it may place its honors on unworthy brows, and thus hold out an encouragement to all kinds of perversion. Intellectual men should read their duty as well as triumph in a nation's eyes ; and whenever, in their writings, they pass the limits of decency and moral restraint, instead of doing it with the confidence that great errors will be pardoned to great genius, should feel themselves driven back by a lightning glance of indignation. When the power of the mind is growing so fast, it is of immense importance to make the feeling of literary obligation firm and strong, and to enforce it with an authority which will neither be defied nor resisted ; and this can be done without difficulty, because men of taste, and poets more than others, have their intellectual being in the world's good opinion. The poet, more than all, needs this restraint of general opinion. The historian makes a slow and patient impression on others ; the force of the orator, except in subjects of unusual interest, is felt in a space hardly broader than the thunder-cloud of the storm ; but the works of Byron, like those of Scott, not confined to the bounds of their language, have been read, we have no doubt, by the northern light at Tornea, and by the pine-torch under the Rocky Mountains ; and in all the various regions between made the wayfaring forget their weariness, and the lonely their solitude, bearing enjoyment to a million of hearts at once, as if by supernatural power. No human power can rival that of the great poet of the day, and, should it become wild and lawless, no despotism under which the earth suffers and mourns, is half so fatal to the interests of men.

Perhaps there never was one, to whom the right direction which the world thus has it in its power to give, was more important than to Byron ; for as may appear in what we shall say of him, he was remarkably deficient in self-dependence, except when wrought up with passion ; his irresolute judgment was strongly contrasted with his genius. Powerful, indeed, he was ; he came not at a time when the field of success was open ; perhaps there has not been a period, when a greater

number of bright stars were met in the heavens. Campbell was shining in the pure brilliancy of his stainless fame ; Southey was pouring out his wild and beautiful epics with a happy disregard of party censure ; Wordsworth was pleading, as he believed, for neglected nature, with a gentle and unregarded voice ; Moore was reposing, like an eastern sovereign in his sultry halls ; at this moment, apparently most inauspicious for his rising, did this new and eccentric orb shoot from the horizon to the upper sky, and in every step of his ascension held men breathless with admiration, till his brightness 'was changed into blood.' But he seemed to take a perverse delight in trifling with his own power, and showing that he valued an imagination as splendid as ever was lighted in the soul, no more than a camera lucida or magic lantern ; and the world still deafened him with applause, even when he poured out strains of sensuality in music worthy of an angel's tongue. Nothing would convince men of his dishonor ; they still believed in his integrity, as they insisted on regarding Napoleon as a friend of freedom, long after he had worn the crown. Let it not be thought strange, that we associate these two names ; for great as Napoleon was, Byron was absolute and undisputed sovereign of the heart—a region in which the other had no power. Byron could send to millions the highest enjoyment, with a few rapid touches of his celestial pen ; and while the throne of the oppressor is broken, he still exerts a mastery which grows and widens as the brass and marble decay. They were not wholly unlike in their destinies ; deluded by the reverence of men, each became a suicide of his own welfare ; and, remembering that they are great examples to all future ambition, we regret the less that they perished as they did ; though each might have left a glorious name, the one as the bravest warrior that ever fought the battles of freedom, the other as the greatest poet of his age.

Any observer of human nature may be interested in the fact, that men are always most zealous in their enthusiasm for characters, which are somewhat doubtful, as well as great. The admirers of a man like Washington criticise him with freedom, knowing that he can only gain by discussion ; but the partisans of eminent characters like those I have mentioned, as if conscious that any opening for inquiry would overthrow their favorite passion, meet every suggestion of the kind, with an outcry precisely resembling that with which the worm-eaten govern-

ments of Europe welcome every proposal of reform. This fervor is not so flattering to such men as is generally imagined; it implies that their admirers are far from being persuaded of their real excellence, though they are resolute in maintaining their own opinion. This is illustrated by the passion for Byron. When he first became generally known, which was not till after his first cantos of *Childe Harold* appeared, his name was surrounded with a colored cloud of romantic associations; and perceiving the charm to be derived from the slight mystery then resting on his condition and character, he kept up the allusion by all the means in his power; new portraits of himself in striking attitudes and drapery, were perpetually held before the public eye; and by these means he inspired a deep feeling, not precisely of respect or regard, but of something more tenacious than either; so that now his admirers hold fast their early opinions of him, as a lover clings to his first impressions; determined to maintain them right or wrong, and resenting as a personal affront every attempt to exhibit his character in its true light. This book will give an unpleasant shock to their imaginations; but at the same time, they have seen his character in a glass so darkly—there is so little distinctness in their conceptions of him, that like the spirits in Milton's battle, his existence cannot be endangered by any mortal blow—he is a vision of fancy in their minds—too unsubstantial to be measured; their opinion of him is not a judgment, but a feeling, which neither argument nor evidence can overthrow.

But there are others, who never have thought it necessary to give up their hearts to the great poet of the day—who have neither taken part with Byron nor against him; to them, this book will wear a very different aspect; they will receive it as the deliberate testimony of a friend, of course as partial as truth and justice will allow, and will see with some surprise, that the strongest feelings awakened by it are those of sorrow and shame. It is painful to see this disproportion between the moral and intellectual characters of distinguished men; and though history might prepare them for such disappointment, they are always dismayed to find those, to whom heaven has been most liberal of its gifts, unfaithful in the use of them. Their kind feeling will be severely tried by this *Life of Byron*; they will say of his mind, as he did of Greece, that it is strange that when Nature has formed it as if for the residence of the gods, man should take a mad delight in making a wilderness and a ruin.

For without overstating his defects, it is true, that they will look in vain through this work for any traces of a sense of duty, either in the use of his social privileges or his intellectual powers; they will see too much levity and profaneness, without wit or humor to cover its grossness; they will see something offensive at times in the style of the biographer's apologies for him, when they are made, not as if necessary, but in deference to common opinion; they will find, that he went through the world at the wind's pleasure, and that his path, though occasionally lighted up with flashes of good feeling, was not such as his friends love to remember. In the natural regret for this waste of life and talent, they may chance to visit his memory with even more severity than it deserves; and therefore we take the opportunity of referring them to one or two circumstances, without which his merits cannot be understood, and which will show, that with all his apparent felicity of birth and fortune, he was more to be pitied than condemned.

The chief misfortune of Byron was his want of early kindness and instruction. The mind resembles a garden, in which flowers and fruit must be cultivated, or weeds will grow; and few could be found, even among vagrants and outcasts, more unfortunate than Byron in the guardians of his tender years. His father was a worthless libertine, who, after the death of his first victim, married Miss Gordon, the poet's mother, with a view to her property, which was large, but soon wasted. His great uncle, from whom he inherited his title, was a man of savage and unsocial character, who was believed to have murdered a gentleman in a quarrel. With him, however, he had no intercourse, nor even with his father, who was soon separated from his wife; so that he was wholly abandoned to his mother's care; and a more injudicious guide of a youth so wild and passionate, could not have been any where found. It has been generally thought that she was fondly indulgent; but the present work effectually clears her memory from any such imputation: she was a woman of violent temper, and rendered still more irritable by her husband's treatment, though she seems to have loved him affectionately after all her wrongs. If to leave her child ungoverned was indulgence, she was guilty; but it could not be expected, that, having no rule over her own spirit, she should be equal to the harder duty of governing her son. Neglect, however, was not the worst offence for which she is answerable; she was the author of that bitterness of spirit, which

made him, though at some times mild and affectionate, at others so sullen and ferocious ; for it seems that she forgot herself so far as to taunt him with that slight lameness, which caused him so much misery in his after years. Little do they know of human nature who wonder at his feeling ; the truth is, that in almost any young person, such vulgar allusions to a personal defect, however trifling, will awaken an excessive sensibility amounting to horror : all the self-torturing energy of the soul will be concentrated on that single point ; and if the wound ever heals in the coldness of manhood or age, it leaves a quick and burning scar. 'His disease of the affections extended throughout his mind and heart ; and to this we are bound to attribute that jealousy which occasionally seemed like madness : and that unsparing resentment of injury which sometimes raged like a flame of fire. Knowing this, we cannot wonder that he regarded his mother without affection, alone as they were in the world. At the same time he discovers in his letters a respect and attention, which clear him from all reproach on this subject : she could expect nothing more of him ; for love is the price of love. Neither were the defects of his domestic education repaired by schools. His mother's poverty prevented her doing him justice in this respect, and he was passed from hand to hand with a view to save expense rather than give instruction. None of his various masters had time to become acquainted with his mind ; and without such an acquaintance with the tastes and powers of the young, teachers are often like unskilful gardeners, who destroy by watering in the sunshine, those blossoms whose habit is to close in preparation for a shower. None of them retained their charge long enough to gain an influence over him. Altogether he had none to lean upon, and no worthy object for his affections to cling to, which is one of the greatest wants of the young and tender heart. This sufficiently accounts for many of his faults ; it explains where his careless desolation began : it shows why he placed so little confidence in the merit and affection of others, why he was so unbelieving in their virtue, and afterwards so indifferent to his own. It accounts for that misanthropy which some suppose was affected, but which there is every reason to suppose was sincere : for, much as he depended on others, ardently as he thirsted for their applause, still, like all others who have no faith in human virtue, he held them in light esteem. Those who cannot live without the world's flattery, sometimes despise the incense-bearers ;

and the person who depends least upon others, is not the misanthrope, but he who takes a manly and generous interest in all around him. Thus melancholy and disheartening was his childhood. Instead of being the gallant bark that Gray describes, standing bravely out to the summer sea, it was the one 'built in the eclipse and rigged with curses dark,' whose destiny was foreseen by the thoughtful before it left the shore.

It may be said, that he might have done like many others whose parents have been unfaithful, and who, by this misfortune, have been driven to that self-education, which Gibbon considers more important than any other. But Lord Byron was most unfavorably situated: this self-discipline is seldom enforced with vigor or success without the pressure of circumstances, or the strong leaning of ambition combining with a sense of duty. But Byron was above the reach of that necessity, which drives so many to great and fortunate exertions. Though poor in childhood, when his wants were few, he had before him what seemed a prospect of unbounded wealth; and the same expectation of rank and honor made him insensible to the call of intellectual glory. He knew that his title would secure him respect, and in this confidence was unambitious of any thing higher; it seemed to be the brightest point in all his visions of future greatness. Those, who, born in humble life, feel the stirrings of ambition, and have no path to eminence open but such as they clear with their own hands, enter upon the work with a vigor which at once gives and strengthens character, and ensures success. Byron, on the contrary, believed from his childhood that he should be respected for his rank alone: it was not till he had reached this great object of desire, and found how barren it was, that he seemed to wish or hope for any other distinction.

The effect of this want of education in mind and character, may be seen in almost every part of his life; even in those illuminated pages which display the triumphs of his genius. He never seems to have had the least confidence in his own taste or judgment with respect to his own productions or those of others. We find him on his return from his first voyage, talking with delight of an imitation of Horace, which his biographer is too conscientious to praise, and at the same time, hardly prevailed upon by the most earnest intreaty, to publish *Childe Harold*, the work on which his fame is built. A taste of this kind is as much formed by society, as by reading and medita-

tion ; but he had acquired a bashful reserve in his childhood, which prevented his reading the eyes or minds of others ; and yet, as the public opinion is the tribunal to which all must bow, he never felt confidence in his opinions till they were confirmed by the general voice. In his judgment of others, he seemed governed by the partiality of the moment. We find him speaking with delight of Coleridge's *Christabel*, or praising Leigh Hunt's affectations, which he was the first to ridicule shortly after. The same wavering appears in his judgment of the English Bards and Scotch Reviewers—a work which he afterwards recanted for no other reason than that his humor had altered. The entire history of this work of wholesale vengeance illustrates the indecision of his mind. In his first indignation at an attack which was certainly enough to irritate a meeker spirit, he forthwith drew his sword and commenced an indiscriminate slaughter of all about him ; but as soon as the moment's madness had passed away, he began to bind up their wounds, at the same time exulting that he had made them feel his power. But the want of every thing like discipline was more plainly manifested in his character ; it was left to itself ; so far as he ever had a character it was formed by the natural and wild growth of his feelings and passions. These feelings and passions were suffered to grow and take their own direction, without the least care or control from any hand. What affectionate instruction might have done, we do not know ;—the experiment was never tried ; he was left to his own guidance, and by feeding on extravagant hopes, he prepared himself to be hurt and disappointed by the ordinary changes of life. Never having been taught what to expect and what he might reasonably demand from others, he received every slight neglect as an injury, put the worst construction on every word and deed, and required of the world what it never gave to any mortal man. In Scotland, his fancy was excited with tales and examples of high ancestral pride ;—rank became, in his eyes, something sacred and commanding ; and there was enough in the history of the Byrons to encourage his loftiness of feeling ; but he was mortified as he came forward into life, to find that the respect paid to it was hollow and unmeaning ; he was received into the House of Lords with as little ceremony as at Eton or Harrow ; and this, though probably a thing of course, was resented by him as an unexampled wrong, for which he insulted the Lord Chancellor at the time, and afterwards impaled Lord Carlisle in various

satirical lines; though the only crime of the former was, that he did not dispense with legal forms in his favor, and Lord Carlisle's transgression, that he did not come at a call. He was still more painfully taught how little could be claimed on the score of rank, by the attack of the *Edinburgh Review*. He could not plead privilege before that bar; a republican from the United States could not have been treated with less ceremony than the English Baron; and it appeared in evidence, that with a regard for principle, of which that work has given more than one example, it abused the poetry for the sake of the man, though his rank was all the provocation. He was also constantly wounded in another tender point—his friendship. With him friendship was a passion, cherished for reasons which he would have found it hard to assign; in its objects, there was no particular merit, save what was generously given them by his active imagination; his little foot-page and his Athenian protégé were of this description; yet he expected of these and others, selected with even less discretion, all the delicacy and ardor of attachment, which might belong to superior natures. He was of course disappointed; and by a process of abstraction found sufficient reasons to libel and detest mankind. Thus in almost every year some favorite charm was broken—some vision dispelled; he came forward into life, like one seeing from afar the family mansion of his race, with its windows kindled by the setting sun—and who, as he approached it, looking for life and hospitality within—found with dismay, as he entered the gate, that all was dark, cold, and deserted.

Byron's melancholy seems to have been owing to these peculiar circumstances of his life. Bright hopes and painful disappointments followed each other in rapid succession; the disappointment being that which attends the gratified desire—of all others, the most difficult to bear. He was his own master, and had all that men commonly wish for; he was thus in a condition where, so far as resources of happiness were concerned, he had nothing more to hope from the world, and that state in which any change must be for the worse, is found by experience to be more intolerable than that in which any change must be for the better. How far his depression was owing to any thing constitutional, we cannot attempt to say, being less acquainted with the nerves of poets than with those of reviewers; but we believe that there are few cases in which

the evil spirit may not be successfully resisted by a resolute will. Unfortunately, those unused to trouble, real or imaginary, become desperate at once, and are ready to make trial of any remedy, to drive the moment's uneasiness away; by dissipation and violent excitement they remove its pressure for a time—but as often as it is lifted, it returns with heavier weight; and at last, like the cottager who burns the thatch and rafters of his cabin to relieve the cold of a winter day, they are left without the least chance of shelter; to supply the vacancy of hope, they consume the materials of happiness at once, and then travel from desolation to desolation, having no resource left, but to become miserable self-destroyers of their own peace, character, and not unfrequently lives.

We regret to find the vulgar impression that this melancholy was owing to his poetical talent, countenanced by such authority as Mr. Moore's; though he does not openly declare that such is his opinion, he intimates that faults and sorrows both were owing to 'the restless fire of genius.' This we believe to be one of the worst heresies in public opinion; beside being dangerous and misleading, it is unjust to the noblest of all arts. Were there no other young men of rank and fortune, equally dissipated with Lord Byron, or did all the companions of his vice and folly share his exalted power? Why need we assign more refined causes for his corruption than for theirs? And more than all, why offer this immunity to those who waste the talent, which was given to bless the world, which we deny to the inferior prodigals of wealth and time? It is unquestionably true, that a quick imagination gives a sharper edge to sorrow, by multiplying, changing, and coloring its images, but it has equal power over images of joy, if the poet can be made to look upon the bright side; and as this depends on his own choice, we cannot sympathise with him very deeply if he insist on being unhappy; we will not throw the blame, which belongs to himself, either on poetry or nature. It is time that justice in this respect were done to poetry; it is a full fountain of consolation; so far from being a Marah in the wilderness of life, there is healing in its waters. The greatest masters of the lyre have found delight in the calm and majestic exertion of all their powers; and while poetry doubles their happiness by its inspirations, it has been found effectual, from the days of Saul till the present, to drive dark thoughts from the soul. No man was ever more indebted to poetry than Lord Byron; we say

nothing of his reputation, though without poetry, he would have left no more name than a thousand other lords ; but we consider him indebted to poetry for all the bright hours that silvered his path of life. That he was a miserable man, no one can doubt, who knows any thing of the effect of distempered fancy and ungovernable passions ; but while he was wildly sacrificing one after another the resources for happiness which surrounded him, and seemed to take an insane pleasure in seeing those treasures melted down in the fires of passion—while he was surrounded by associates, who were enough to put to flight all those better feelings, which could not quite forsake him, even when he seemed most resolute to let them go—while in self-inflicted banishment, his face was always turned toward his country, although he spoke of it with hatred and scorn—while his wild, fierce, and riotous mirth, only manifested the self-condemnation and torture within—he was indebted to poetry, for fanning the embers of his better nature—for kindling up those flashes of manly and generous emotion, which, transient and wavering though they were, have been enough to secure for him the admiring compassion of the world. Nothing can extinguish this sacred light of the soul ; it is an immortal element, which floods cannot drown ; it often revealed to him the true character of his companions, and his own conduct, making him heart-sick of the scenes in which his life was wasted, and the associates among whom he was thrown ; it led him to all the excellence which he ever knew ; and when weary of degradation, he made one last effort with his foot on the native soil of inspiration, to rise to his proper place among the sons of light, it was evidently owing to poetry, that any thing worthy to redeem, was yet existing in his soul.

Equal injustice is done to poetry, by saying, as is often said, in the case of Byron, that misery is the parent of its inspirations. Poetry is the work, not of circumstances, but of mind ; of disciplined and powerful mind ; which so far from being the sport of circumstances, makes them bend to its power. There is neither romance, nor elegance in real distress ; it is too real, oppressive, and disheartening ; the mind, so far from dwelling upon it, turns away with disgust and aversion. The person in suffering of body or mind, no more thinks of the fine emotions his situation awakens, than the soldier bleeding on the plain, who would exchange the fame of Cæsar for a drop of water to cool his burning tongue. It is true, that such a person often ex-

presses himself in poetical, that is, in strong language ; but this is not poetry, which expresses a vivid imagination of the sorrow, rather than the reality, and implies a steady scrutiny of feelings, and a measuring of the depth and power of language, to which real suffering is a stranger. The whole advantage which a poet derives from acquaintance with grief, is the same he might borrow from being present in a storm at sea ; he could no more describe his emotions, at the moment when every nerve is strained and wrung with grief, than he could sit down to paint the sublimity of the tempest, when the vessel lets in water at every seam. Afterwards, he may remember the circumstances, and recall the feelings ; and if he do it with judgment and selection, may affect the minds of his readers with impressions similar to his own. But he cannot do this, till the fear and anguish are gone ; or at least, till he finds a consolation in the exercise of his mind, which makes him forget his sorrows. No stronger confirmation of this can be given than the lines addressed to Thyrza, which exceed all lyrical poetry in the language for the deep feeling which they express. They were addressed to an imaginary person, and the emotions, if he ever had felt them, were at the moment of writing, dictated by the fancy rather than the heart. While therefore we believe that Byron was melancholy in his temperament, we do not believe that poetry was either the cause or the effect of his depression ; his sadness was owing to the circumstances of his life ; but whether natural or accidental, it must be admitted in extenuation of his faults, because even if accidental, it was formed at an early period by events, over which he had but little control.

We make these remarks, not by any means because we consider these circumstances as a full justification of Byron's character ; but because this book will give a very unfavorable impression ; and as title and fortune are generally thought to be names for happiness, it may chance, to be forgotten, that there was any thing in his condition to be pleaded in excuse for his transgressions. His reputation needs the apology, and he has a right to the benefit of it, as far it will go. Some may wonder to hear the name 'unfortunate' applied to this great favorite of the world ; and yet, whoever reads his life with any attention, will feel that there are few so little to be envied as he. There is something inexpressibly dreary in his history. He never knew any thing of a father's kindness, nor in truth of

a mother's love; there was no hand to point out to him the right way, and no strong arm on which his own might lean: his was no school to prepare him for a virtuous life; and perhaps such a life would not have been expected of him, if his mind, undisciplined as his character, had not displayed such remarkable vigor. Expected or not, such a life is not here recorded; and all we ask is, that whoever is painfully struck with this account of his conduct, would take all its palliations, such as they are, into view.

The outline of Byron's history was well known before this work; and as this volume must have been in the hands of nearly all our readers, we shall not give the particulars of his life, though many are curious and interesting; particularly such as show how comfortless a splendid life may be. Much light is thrown upon the promise of his youth; the strong testimonials of affection given by some of his companions, show that he had warm and generous feelings to those whom he loved, but that he was sufficiently haughty and sour to others, with or without provocation. He was in no wise ambitious of improvement in the schools; but rather made it a point of honor to rebel against their discipline, which he ever afterwards held in contempt, as men hate that which they have injured. His biographer considers this impatience of restraint an evidence of genius, which, in his opinion, needs no such aids nor laws, and is therefore at liberty to defy them. If the remarks made on this subject were intended to bear upon the English universities only, we should not notice them; but they seem meant as a reflection upon all classical studies pursued in schools. The writer quotes Lord Byron's saying of Virgil and Horace—that his school acquaintance with those classics gave him a distaste for them ever after. The whole truth probably was, that he never troubled himself to ascertain the strength and fidelity of his early associations. Had he read them in maturer years, it is impossible that such boyish recollections should have made him insensible to their beauties; and he would at least have felt, that such a defect of taste and judgment is what one should sooner confess than avow. He could have meant nothing more than to express in a decided manner his aversion to schools; and in this his biographer goes with him, bringing forward great examples of those who felt the same aversion. But it happens, unfortunately for the argument, that these were, most of them, such as had been censured and disgraced at such institutions. It

is not probable that it was a deliberate conviction of the badness of the system, which induced them to violate its laws; the irregularities of youth are more easily accounted for; but those who know how long resentment for such disgrace endures, will not wonder that it influenced their judgment in manhood and age. But this, their partial evidence, is carried further than it was meant to go. We cannot say that Milton was in favor of anarchy, because he wrote against oppression; nor that he was opposed to religion, because he rejected certain doctrines. There may have been many defects in the education of his day, which revealed themselves to his prophetic eye before they were seen by others; but this is an argument not for destruction but reform.

We regret to see such intimations in this work; deliberate opinions we cannot suppose them to be. We do not believe that the writer, though he thinks that the Greeks wrote their language in such purity because they abstained from every other, would recommend a similar abstinence to his readers; when it was owing in them to the want of treasures in any other language which would repay the labor of acquiring it. Nor do we suppose that he would seriously advise us to break up such institutions, and leave the young to forage in the fields of learning and science for a precarious subsistence. To resist the authorities of the schools was not a sure way to make a Milton, nor is every one likely to become a Franklin who runs away from home. But he should have guarded against perversion of his opinions; that they might not countenance the irregularities of genius; that idle impression, which has kept so many fine minds from feeling the necessity of improvement, and inspired so many dunces with a sweet confidence in their own talents, founded on their defiance of all control. Byron and many others became great, not by their transgressions, but in spite of them; had he submitted to the usual discipline of youth, or, more properly speaking, had he enjoyed it, he might have led a better and happier life, and left no cause for his admirers to blush for the cloud upon his fame; though he would have astonished the world less, he might have secured a more enviable immortality.

In speaking of Byron's infidelity, Mr. Moore indulges in a fanciful speculation on unbelief in general, regarding it as a fortunate circumstance, that such skepticism does not begin till the character is already formed. We cannot easily persuade

ourselves that the character is ever formed without some decision of the mind and heart either for or against religion. The character may begin to lean in one or another direction; but religion, if it have any power, must exert it in fixing that direction, and its mere absence from the heart may have the same effect with infidelity. But we cannot conceive of any one growing up to the age of thoughtfulness, to the time when tastes are decided and habits fully formed, without asking himself whether he believes in his own immortality. If he grow up under religious influences, and afterwards become persuaded that religion is not sustained by evidence, his infidelity may be less injurious, because his judgment must approve the course of life recommended by Christianity, whatever he may think of its divine origin. But with respect to Byron, as his biographer testifies, and we believe with respect to others, the case is different; infidelity begins at an earlier age—the age when the mind first discovers its own powers, and exults in its conscious freedom—the age when it has not yet learned that the trodden path is not to be despised, and takes pride in defying common opinion—at such an age, the mind is much more likely to shape its religion to its wishes, than to submit its wishes to religion; and it is easier for us to believe, that Lord Byron, and others like him, fashioned their faith after the taste of the moment, than that they reasoned on the subject after the manner of Herbert and Hume.

Byron had become associated at such an age as this with a number of young men, who, taking his own description, were not likely to exert a happy influence over a lawless and wayward mind. Among others, there was Matthews, to whom he has paid so beautiful a tribute in *Childe Harold*—a man of remarkable promise, if we may judge from the eulogies of his friends, but a professed atheist, and fond of employing his wit on subjects which any man of principle, whether atheist or Christian, would have kept apart from profanation. Byron held him in great respect, and was doubtless injured by his influence; the more so from his having previously thought, or at least expressed himself with some interest on religious subjects; having at no period of his life any great confidence in himself, he was easily laughed out of his religion, and, to show the sincerity of his contempt for it, may have made a show of indifference to it which he did not really feel; at any rate, it was driven from his thoughts; and he seldom speaks of it at

all, except when he paints the desolation of his feeling; and the very dreariness which he ascribes to him, who cannot look beyond the tomb, shows that he knew the value of the hope of immortality, though he felt that the wilderness about him would not be complete, if any shoot from the tree of life were seen to grow. But there was nothing in his habits of life, which could make this a welcome subject, except for the poetical interest which it afforded; and therefore he dismissed it, as one part from a stranger, not as he tears from his heart the friend whom he is compelled to believe untrue. It is in this way, that young infidels are generally formed. Unbelief is too strong a word for their state of mind, if it mean that they have rejected Christianity from want of evidence to satisfy their minds; for there is so little to make this a pleasing subject of contemplation to them—so little in it that flatters, and so much that condemns—they have learned so little of the importance of its hopes, having never yet found the springs of common enjoyment dry, that they do not suffer it to come near enough to their minds to have its claims and evidence weighed; they rest in that state of unbelief which amounts to indifference, and, though they sometimes startle others by a parade of infidelity, do not differ from thousands who call themselves believers; and they are not worse than they would be, if they bore the name of Christians.

Mr. Moore has given a very liberal account of the attack of the *Edinburgh Review*; which, however painful to Byron at the time, was a fortunate humiliation for him, as it taught him the secret of his own powers. Mr. Moore thinks that we judge these poems more favorably from our impressions received from his later writings; but we suspect that the association of the splendid efforts of later years with his imperfect beginnings would not tend to raise the latter in our estimation. The effect would be that of contrast, and would make us think of the first attempts more meanly than they deserve. The question, however, is not, whether the poems were good or bad; we think that many of them are good: but whether the offence was such as to call for such a severe infliction, which, to Byron, who had high ideas of the majesty of reviews, was a tremendous blow. Whether the attack was justifiable or not—the manner no one will defend—the review had no reason to boast its success. For, though Byron retorted in a poem, which, with all its excellence and vigor, is wanting in consistency and

justice—which, in many parts was unpardonably insulting to those, who, like Scott, had never offended him—though he goes far beyond the review in the very transgression of which he complained—still, so heartily did the public feeling go with him in his resentment, that his work was received with unbounded applause. The whole history of this affair deserves attention, as showing how little there was fixed and decided in Byron's character. When the review took the only ground that was left it after his *Childe Harold* appeared, and with amiable unconsciousness professed its surprise that he should have suspected it of unkind intentions, he was melted at once; such a concession seemed but too great, and he hastened to repair the injury he had done by suppressing the *English Bards* and *Scotch Reviewers*. All this was well; for he did it on his own account more than theirs; what we would remark, is the confidence in his own powers which sprang from his success on this occasion, when the fires of genius were kindled by those of passion. It was a limited confidence; though he knew himself mighty, he did not judge with more confidence than before, of the respective merits of his different productions. As far as it went, it was sustained by the general feeling; and when that foundation gave way, or rather, when in their dislike for his person, his countrymen began to underrate his mind, abusing him with zeal proportioned to their former idolatry, he, with his usual recklessness, set the general feeling at defiance: not because he had laid any deep plars of revenge, or approved at heart of profaneness and sensuality, but because he felt for the time like *Richard III.*, and resolved, that, since he could no longer entertain, he would defy the world. We do not believe that he could have given a reason why he attacked so many unoffending poets in his satire; we do not believe that he could have drawn the poisoned element of *Don Juan* from any deep fountains in his own heart; we do not believe that he could have explained much of the conduct of his life, except by saying that such was his humor: it had been freely indulged through all his youth, and this was the reason that he would do and say what he could not justify, rather than seem under any control; this was the reason, that, when he had no longer a home, but was, like his *Cain*, a wanderer, he put on this resolute air of independence, to show that he could 'take his ease in his own inn.' Such characters are never resolute, but when they take their stand against others—so long as the

opposition lasts, their firmness endures; and in the indulgence of this defiance, regardless of what is right or wrong, they go as far beyond their own feelings as those of others, treating every thing unworthy, as justified by the rules of war.

Here we may as well say that we must be careful not to give too much weight to little incidents and expressions in forming our opinion of such characters. Mr. Moore occasionally errs in this respect; attaching an unnecessary importance to some of his sayings and actions, which, however they might bear upon his character, supposing them to be deliberate and meditated, are evidently vacant and unmeaning. For example, Byron, once holding the point of a dagger to his breast, was overheard to say, 'I should like to know how a person feels after committing a murder.' 'Here,' says his biographer, 'we may discover the germs of his future *Giaours* and *Corsairs*.' This is certainly magnifying an idle word and action; hundreds of youths, who could as soon have written the *Principia* as the *Corsair*, have done and said the same thing, without ever touching the secret spring that discovers the dark passions of the soul. Such indications as this amount to nothing; and it is difficult to judge from others of more importance, because young men born to no restraint and exempt by privilege, or misfortune, as it should be called, of birth, from those weights which regulate the motions of others, are apt to consider what others call serious things as trifles, and to exalt trifles into absurd importance: so that it is difficult to judge of their feeling from their conduct, beyond the main fact that the moral sentiment is inactive and perverted. Byron was certainly one of this class. He has left some sad examples of his talent at degrading into trifles what others hold in respect: saying that they were thoughtless, is not excusing them, for he was of an age to know what he was doing, and thoughtlessness is a crime if it lead to sacrilege and sensuality. That he made trifles important, appears from the influence he gave to his imagination in the conduct of life; he imagined himself set apart by his destiny from the communion of mankind—among them, but not of them: he was really desolate, but he imagined himself more so—and though one like him, might, by effort, have mastered all the unfavorable circumstances of his life, and have risen at any time from weakness to power, and from dishonor to glory, he imagined that nature and man conspired to keep him an alien from his race. Thus all his feelings were fancies—and

the day-dreams of imagination grew into the circumstances by which his life was governed. No one can account for his movements, without being in the same condition or under the same delusions: 'he sees a hand we cannot see, he hears a voice we cannot hear.' We do not believe that he could have explained to himself half the actions of his life; he could not remember the impulse by which he acted, after the fancy had died away; he had no conception of himself, except as a Harold or a Conrad, and these were creations of fancy, which had no original in any men that ever existed. No wonder that he should be still more unaccountable to others; sometimes he seems to us to move as much without reason as the wayfarer, who turns aside, mistaking the western clouds for mountains. Those who regard him as acting like other men in the same condition, will have but little forgiveness for his errors; while those who know the power of a busy imagination to suggest various courses of action—to conjure up obstacles or inducements, and to give the color of right to that which is wrong, will feel, as if, though they may not defend his words and deeds, there may be palliations visible to that eye that reads the heart.

The effect of his first travels is beautifully described by Mr. Moore, and may serve as a confirmation of what we have said respecting his want of energy within, and the manner in which he required to be sustained by lateral pressure. Strength of mind he possessed in abundance, but he had not strength of heart. He went away, feeling that satiety which always follows a surrender of the soul to pleasure, going out as it seemed, with little more than change of place in view; but his wanderings led him through regions where travel abounds, not merely as in more civilised regions, in vexation, but also in hardship and adventure. Every thing that he saw was new, and calculated to awaken the imagination, from the barbaric power of Ali Pacha, to the eloquent ruins of Athens; like all who have breathed the air of classical literature, the love of Greece lay deep in his soul; and when he traversed her blue waters and lonely mountains, he heard the voice of ages fast calling on him to secure a glorious immortality in all that were to come. He listened and 'his spirit was stirred in him,' his mind was excited to manly and vigorous actions, and he poured out his soul in strains never exceeded for the depth and fulness of their meaning or the bold music of their flow. Who will deny

that the inspiration which he borrowed from the land of recollections was afterwards splendidly repaid? The variety of scenes through which he passed—the persons he encountered and the places full of interest, which he saw, produced the effect of discipline and education; his mind learned to act with spirit and decision; and as he became fitted for intellectual duties and pleasures, he acquired a self-sustaining force, which rightly directed might have made him not merely eminent, but useful and happy. Before that time, he had been an entire stranger to intellectual exertion; though he had read much, it was with irregular and aimless range; whatever may be said of the improvement derived from his cultivated society at Newstead, is fully answered by their own descriptions of the engagements of a day; beside them, his associates were dogs, bears, and professors of pugilism, the most brutal of all arts. It was a fortunate hour when he grew weary of his pleasures, and fled to regions where all around him was calculated to excite curiosity and call out his powers. For even in poetry, up to this time he was inclined to an imitative style, which was to his faculties like the cramp of artificial gracefulness to the limbs, preventing all free action, except when as in the case of the review his momentary passion burst the cords with which his hands were bound. It was not, as his biographer supposes, that he grew more in love with solitude; solitude would not have invigorated a mind like his; it would have been stagnation to the fountains of his genius, and it needed all his activity in travel to trouble the waters; activity of the frame was essential to that of his mind; and thus quickened, he broke, in spite of himself, the chain of old poetical practice, and while he retained all his reverence for the classical form and his resolution to excel in it, indulged himself in other writings more suited to his taste; regarding the latter as the play and the former as his high ambition. This was the origin of *Childe Harold*—a sort of poetical journal of his thoughts and feelings, taken down in the moment's glow; he hardly considered it worthy the name of poetry; and yet nothing ever more surprised and delighted the world. This was what travel had done for him—it taught him to throw off his literary distrust and reserve, and to speak with ease and energy the native language of his heart.

There are few more interesting facts in literary history than this; Mr. Dallas saw Lord Byron immediately after his return and heard him speak with enthusiasm of a work, which he

believed would add much to his fame. This he put into Mr. Dallas's hands, who read it with dismay, and ventured to ask his Lordship if this was all the result of two interesting years. He said in reply, that he had some other short poems occasionally written during his absence, but they were not worth attention, and while he gave these carelessly to Mr. Dallas he insisted on the immediate publication of the other. Fortunately, the person into whose hands they fell, had capacity to understand their value and immediately told Lord Byron of the treasure he had found ; but it was with the utmost difficulty he could prevail on the author to give it to the world. There are several such instances on record of the little power of authors to judge of their own productions, but none so remarkable as this. We allude to it as showing the manner in which he estimated the merit of his works by the labor with which they were written. He learned the right practice before he acquired the right taste ; like the waking giant he threw off the bands which could only hold him while sleeping ; and yet, had he remained in the Abbey where external influence could not be brought to bear upon his mind, he might have lived and died, leaving no more to be remembered than one of the monks that slept under its floors.

When Lord Byron returned to England, after his first travels, he felt as if he were going back, without pleasure, to a land which had no claim upon his affections. It is true, that he had few of those attractions at home ; but how many there are who have none of the enjoyments embraced in that inspiring word ; and how many more whose home is only a distant and painful recollection ! He had no friends either, except such as were ready-made ; as he was prevented by pride and reserve from cultivating new attachments, there were few to welcome his return. Beside this, his circumstances were so unpromising, that Newstead had been entered with an execution. Such anticipations may have made him look forward at times to his return with a feeling of dread. It must be allowed too, that he overrated his own misery ; he fixed his eyes on dark points, such as are found in every man's prospect, till there seemed to be nothing bright for him to hope or enjoy. He insisted on being miserable, as if it were a sacred duty, and there are many passages in his letters of 'most humorous sadness,' which remind us of Cowper's penitential letters to Newton, in which his natural mirth is perpetually breaking through the

artificial cloud. The very circumstance that he cherished so much the acquaintance of grief, proves that it could not have sunk so deep as he imagined, for sorrows always present, soon become, like the skulls on his table, too familiar to excite the least emotion. Altogether, it seems evident to us that Byron's heart was set on England ; it certainly was so far as this,—that he found neither home nor rest in any other country. And how could it be otherwise? Lord Byron was thoroughly English in all his habits, tastes, and feelings ; not only in his occasional courage, manliness and generosity, but in his haughtiness, caprice, and suspicion. His favorite amusements were of the rough and active kind, and some of his pleasures we must say, bore an English taint of grossness. He was English in his jealous and defensive pride, which could not pardon slight neglect, so easily as serious wrongs. There was no place where he found the least happiness, except in England ; and when he left it at last, with expressions of hatred and defiance, it is evident that his wrath was fiercer, because he felt that he could not cease to love the land he had abandoned. While he lived abroad, he welcomed associates who had nothing but the name of English to recommend them, with as much delight, as Capt. Cooke saw the leaden spoon with the mark of London on one of the Sandwich Islands. It was the indignation and despair occasioned by his loss of popularity in England, which made him descend to low and licentious satire, in order to show that indifference which he never felt to England's good opinion. The fierce violence of disappointed pride is not to be hidden under a jesting tone. He seemed to act with the feeling of a lover to an unkind mistress—plunging into dissipation, with the wish and hope of giving her pain by his vices. Byron in like manner trusted that when England heard his voice echoing in riotous mirth from a foreign land, she would accuse herself of severity, and lament that so much power was lost, or worse than lost to the world. He felt all the while, as if the English public were the arbiters of his fame ; and probably, when he left England the second time, he would have chosen rather to remain, and face the changed wind of popular feeling which beat in a perfect storm upon him, had he not felt as if his poetical fame was waning, and his circumstances in hopeless confusion. But wherever he went, 'What will they say of us in England?' was the uppermost question, asked partly in tenderness, partly in scorn ;—it had its share in

the impulse which drove him to Greece, and when he perished there we believe that England,—we know that his wife, child, and sister,—were the last mortal vision that faded from his soul.

Lord Byron never appeared in so interesting a light, as at the time when Childe Harold had made him the gaze of every eye. This was the happiest and most brilliant portion of his life; indeed the only portion to which those words can properly be applied. Beside his literary pretensions, he had begun to aspire to the fame of an orator, and had already spoken once or twice, with promising success. But all other hopes were dimmed by his poetical triumph, and seldom has there broken on the eye of man a scene of equal glory. He had not anticipated this; he had reproached himself with relying so far on the opinion of his friends, as to give his poem to the press; his success therefore was made more welcome by surprise; and when we remember that in addition to this he had the charms of high birth, renowned ancestry, and uncommon beauty of person, it is not strange that the public with its English enthusiasm, should have been transported with admiration. Wherever he went he was received with rapture; nobility, fashion, even royalty itself united in the general acclamation; his natural shyness passed for the absence of genius; his constraint in formal society was taken for the coldness of sorrow; his brow was supposed to be overcast by a melancholy imagination; his faults, so far as known, gave an air of romantic wildness to his character, though they were generally veiled by the clouds of incense that rose from every side and gathered round him. Those who had suffered from his sarcasm laid their resentment by; and came manfully forward to offer at once their forgiveness and applause; sensitive as he was on the subject of self, he had every thing to keep him in a state of perpetual excitement, delightful, no doubt for a time, but calculated, when its first freshness was over, to bring more uneasiness than gratification; and a poor preparation for that hour when the sounds of applause were to die away, and nothing to be heard but the murmur of condemnation, that reached him even across the deep.

As we have said, he appears more amiable at this period of his life than at any other; for a time, he is at peace with himself and all around him. The appearance of the *Giaour*, and the compliments paid him by Jeffrey on that occasion, completed his exultation. But while it is pleasant to witness the

rejoicing of success, Byron's friends, had they known his nature, would have trusted but little to the promise of that hour. We cannot judge of a dwelling by its appearance when illuminated for a victory, nor of any character by the happiness produced by circumstances ; for such happiness cannot last, and when it goes, it leaves the heart more desolate than it was before. If the world's favor did not change, it was almost certain that he himself would alter ; after living on this exciting element for a while, it would naturally lose its power ; the fountain having been drained in the beginning could not be filled anew ; and as nothing less luxurious would satisfy his desires, he must of course return to his old state of depression, sinking low in proportion to the height from which he fell. Such was the result ; we soon find him making arrangements for another voyage ; he seemed to anticipate the time when the popular interest should fail him, and therefore kept himself as much apart as possible ; still the change was to come in the order of nature, and it came first in him ; he grew weary of receiving sooner than the world of giving its praise. He says of Sheridan, 'What a wreck is that man ! and all from bad pilotage ; for no one had ever better gales.' The same might be said of himself at this time ; but the truth is, that no winds are favorable to those who are not made in a measure independent of circumstances by something firm within ; when energy at heart is wanting, it requires a miraculous combination of circumstances to keep one good, prosperous or happy.

This brings us to Lord Byron's marriage and separation ; a piece of history which has long been publicly discussed, and with a freedom unusual in such cases ; it was investigated perhaps with the more earnestness from its being carefully hidden ; but now, the slight mystery that hung over it is removed by Mr. Moore's publication, and a statement from Lady Byron, which has followed it, and which reveals all the circumstances that the public are likely ever to know. This is the first time she has ever appealed to the public against the charm of her husband's poetical insinuations ; silence was certainly the more dignified course, and no explanation from her was called for ; the public feeling in the circle round them was all on her side, and Lord Byron was visited with a sentence of outlawry, which made him an exile ever after. There was a stern cry of indignation against him, which indicated either that the English fashionable world had been suddenly converted to rigid morality, or that his popu-

larity was on the wane, and enemies of all descriptions, literary and political, took advantage of the moment to give him a fatal blow. The history of the separation, as given in this work, leaves a charge of duplicity on Lady Byron, which she did wisely to repel. He says, that shortly after the birth of her daughter, she went to visit her parents; they parted in the utmost kindness; she wrote him a letter on the way full of playfulness and affection, and as soon as she arrived at Kirkby Mallory, her father wrote to inform Lord Byron that she would never return. This was at a time when his pecuniary embarrassments had become intolerably pressing; executions had been repeatedly in his house; and for a wife to choose this time and manner to leave her husband would inspire a natural prejudice against her, unless there were grave reasons to justify her apparent want of sincerity and good feeling.

Lady Byron explains her conduct in a letter written to justify her parents from the charge of interfering on this occasion. She states that she believed her husband insane, and acted upon that impression, both in leaving him and in writing her letter, choosing the tone and manner least likely to irritate his passions. She states that had she not considered him insane, she could not have borne with him so long. She endeavored to obtain a separation, but the circumstances were not thought sufficient to make out the case of insanity. We are not surprised that such was her impression. Mr. Moore mentions that Byron was in the habit of keeping fire-arms in his carriage and near his bed. Such extravagance was enough to excite her suspicion of his soundness of mind; and there was nothing to quiet her apprehensions in his temper, which was grown irresistible by long indulgence of self-will; he was wholly untaught to submit to those mutual concessions, which domestic happiness and harmony require. When we remember that his passions, which he himself describes as occasionally savage, were incensed by seeing his house repeatedly in possession of officers of the law, no wonder that all should have seemed like madness, to her even spirit and uniform feelings.

We do not know how any one acquainted with the history of their attachment, could have anticipated any other result. The first mention of Lady Byron is found in the *Journal*.

‘A very pretty letter from Annabella, which I answered. What an odd situation and friendship is ours! without one spark of love on either side, and produced by circumstances which in

general lead to coldness on one side and aversion on the other. She is a very superior woman, and very little spoiled, which is strange in an heiress—a girl of twenty—a peeress that is to be in her own right, an only child, and a *savante*, who has always had her own way. She is a poetess—mathematician—metaphysician, and yet very kind, generous, and gentle, with very little pretension.’ p. 331.

Here it seems there was no love on either side. He says in another place, ‘a wife would be the salvation of me;’ and this Mr. Moore explains, by his conviction that ‘it was prudent to take refuge in marriage from those perplexities, which form the sequel of all less regular ties.’ These are ominous words. He offered himself at that time to Miss Milbanke, and was rejected; ‘on neither side was love either felt, or professed.’ ‘In the meantime new entanglements, in which his heart was the willing dupe of his fancy and vanity, came to engross the young poet; and still, as the usual penalties of such pursuits followed, he found himself sighing for the sober yoke of wedlock as some security against their recurrence.’ Such is his friend’s account of the reasons of this connexion. Some time after this a friend advised him to marry, to which he assented, ‘after much discussion.’ He himself was for another application to Miss Milbanke, but his friend dissuaded him, on the ground that she was learned, and had then no fortune. He at last agreed that his friend should write a proposal to another lady; it was rejected. ‘You see,’ said Lord Byron, ‘that Miss Milbanke is to be the person.’ He immediately wrote to her, and his friend reading what he had written, said, ‘this is really a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go.’ ‘Then it shall go,’ said Lord Byron. It went, and the offer was accepted. In this way the most important action of his life was done. He said, ‘I must of course reform,’ and with this shadow of a resolution, he went through the ceremony in a kind of thoughtless heaviness, which he was at no pains to conceal. What induced Lady Byron to risk her happiness in such an adventure, we cannot tell, unless she was ambitious of the glory of reforming such a man. If so, she did her part, by his own acknowledgment.

‘I do not believe, and I must say it, in the dress of this bitter business, that there ever was a better, or even a brighter, kinder, more agreeable or more amiable being than Lady B. I never had, nor can have, any reproach to make her while with me.’

Such hopes are invariably disappointed ; their only chance of success consists in a strong hold upon the affections, which she never had on his. Such a marriage contract, like the book of some ancient prophet, was written within and without, with lamentation, mourning, and woe.

Mr. Moore is inclined to attribute all this to the incapacity of men of genius to enjoy domestic peace. He forgets that in defending his friend, he does injustice to talent as well as to Him who gave it. Examples may be found among poets of such unfortunate marriages, but there is no connexion of cause and effect between their genius and their guilt or calamity, which ever it may be. We do not believe a single word of his refined speculation on this subject. We cannot believe that poetical inspiration, that glorious gift of God, can ever be a curse to its innocent possessor. Like every thing else, it may be abused ; and then the greater the power the wider will be the destruction. But there is no tendency to abase in its nature. There is no need of giving the reins to imagination. Where this power is strong, the judgment, if encouraged, will be strong in full proportion, and, if taught to do its office, will keep the fancy from excesses as well as the passions. So far from giving even a distaste for reality, it will give a charm to reality by surrounding it with elevating associations, it will raise its possessor above the common level of life, not too high to see all things distinctly, and yet so high that he can look over and beyond them. Man is made lord of all his passions—invested with power over all the elements of his nature. He may keep or he may resign it ; he may cast the crown from his head—he may make himself the slave of those affections which he is bound to govern ; but let him not libel his nature, for he makes himself weak when heaven meant him to be strong ; he sinks himself into degradation and sorrow where Providence would never have placed him. The fault is all in his own infirmity of purpose and will.

We shall not probably have another opportunity of speaking of Lord Byron, and we cannot leave the subject without saying a word of his writings. His name has now become historical, and his works are registered in the treasures of English poetry. Now, if ever, they can be fairly judged. The enthusiasm in favor of the writer has nearly died away ; and, as usual in cases of reaction, begins to be succeeded by an indifference, which is more fatal than any other infliction to a poet's fame.

His works are not so much read at present as they will be some years hence, when what is obscure and prosaic about them will be passed by, the grosser parts dismissed to oblivion, and that which is great and excellent be read with an unmingled pleasure, which his readers cannot now enjoy.

Childe Harold is his most important work, and on this and his lyrical poems his fame must ultimately depend. It was a secret outpouring of his soul, deeply colored by his peculiar genius and feeling. It bears no marks of that constraint and adaptation produced by a consciousness that the public eye was upon him. The *Childe* is a character sufficiently natural, and the feelings embodied in it by the poet, allowing for a little overstatement, nearly resembled his own. It was a happy imagination to represent only the more striking scenes, such as would be likely to fix the attention of an uninterested wanderer. It affords an excuse for passing over what is unsuited to poetical description, and for giving bold relief to such as could kindle the vacant pilgrim's heart and eye. All about the poem, even its abruptness and disorder, is brought into keeping, so that irregularity becomes a beauty.

But the character of the *Childe* was so successful, and he was so much flattered by its being taken for a likeness of his own, that, instead of imagining new, he was tempted to draw it again. In the *Giaour*, *Corsair*, and other poems, he multiplies copies of this original; but in attempting to give them additional effect, he has gone beyond the bounds of truth and nature. We can imagine some good feelings lingering in the ruins of a libertine's character, and reviving when his heart is moved to tenderness; but to transfer the same affections to pirates and murderers is so shocking to probability, that none but very young readers can be interested. It is surprising that he should not have felt, that to ascribe habitual good feeling to such a character is quite as unnatural, as to imagine good men living in the practice of robbery and murder. Still these works abound in traits of great loveliness and power; and though they did not injure his fame, could not prevent its natural decline—a decline which must come unless every new effort of a poet transcend the last. It was an indifference which he could not well bear. Though he constantly declared his weariness of the world and the men of it, he could not endure that the world should grow weary of him.

We must say that we consider some of his lyrical poems

as the finest in the language. The deep feeling which he delighted to express was better suited to short pieces than to long poems. For though in a poem such passages occur at times with startling effect, they give the humble aspect of prose to all that comes between. But many of them are out of the reach of criticism or of praise. The allusions to lost friends which close the two first cantos of *Childe Harold* never will be read without emotion. His 'Night before Waterloo' will make hearts thrill longer than the victory, and his 'Thunder Storm in the Alps' will be remembered as long as thunders roll.

We are bound to say of this work, that the moral tone is not what it should have been. Not that the writer endeavors to conceal Lord Byron's faults—he tells them without reserve ; nor that he flatters the moral character of his subject. So far as he had any clear conceptions of a character so unformed, he gives them with great impartiality. But he speaks of vices at times with a light and careless air, as if they were harmless if not discovered. Still the moral effect of his work will not be so unfavorable as might be feared ; for, beside that it is not likely to be popular, envy is the very last feeling which his account of Lord Byron would inspire. Never was there a more striking picture of a man splendidly unhappy ; weak in character, though mighty in his powers ; solitary as a hermit, though born to rank and fortune ; wandering without pleasure and reposing without rest ; admired by millions and loved by very few ; able to move the spirit of nations, and himself like the great ocean lifted and broken by gales that would not have agitated humbler waters. We freely confess that we read his history with compassion ; feeling as if one who was never directed in the right way, could hardly be said to have wandered. But no such feelings can deceive us into an approbation of his character ; we hold him up as a warning, not as an example. We might have waited for the conclusion of this 'Life,' but for various reasons thought it better to notice the first volume. There can be nothing to make us regret that we have done so in the registry yet to come. His hopeless fall began after his separation from his wife and his retreat from England. We have followed him to the edge of the cataract, and have no disposition to see him dash below.